

ARLINGTON HALL STATION, MAIN BUILDING
4000 Arlington Boulevard
Arlington
Arlington County
Virginia

HABS NO. VA-1270-A

HABS
VA
7-ARL,
12A

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Mid-Atlantic Region
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ARLINGTON HALL STATION, MAIN BUILDING
(BUILDING 1)

HABS No. VA-1270-A

Location: The Main Building (Building 1) is located south of the main entrance to Arlington Hall Station, at the junction of Seventh and Fifth Streets. Arlington Hall Station is located at 4000 Arlington Boulevard, Arlington, Arlington County, Virginia

USGS Alexandria, VA Quadrangle. Universal Transverse Mercator
Coordinates: 18.317500.4304000

Present Owner: General Services Administration

Present Occupant: United States Army

Present Use: Military Post

Significance: The Main Building (Building 1) is associated with the development, between 1927 and 1942, of Arlington Hall as a women's junior college and, after 1942, as the headquarters of United States Army intelligence activities.

Constructed in 1927, the Main Building was the first building at Arlington Hall intended to serve a strictly educational purpose. It originally housed administrative offices, reception rooms, classrooms, and dormitory rooms for the students. Within a year the college built a wing on the east side of the original building. Presently known as Building 1, the Main Building is representative of the development of women's post-secondary educational institutions in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

In 1942 the United States Army took over Arlington Hall Junior College and established its Signal Intelligence Service (SIS) in the former school buildings. The Main Building, renamed Building 1 or the Headquarters Building, became the site for all SIS operations. After the completion of additional buildings on the site, Building 1 was devoted entirely to administrative functions. Since World War II Army intelligence agencies have continued to use Building 1. These activities are largely cloaked in secrecy.

Part I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Dates of erection: 1927, wing 1928, addition post-1963.
2. Architect/Engineer: 1927 and 1928 unknown, post-1942 U.S. Army.
3. Original and Subsequent Owners: Arlington Junior College (1927-1942), U.S. Army (1942-1989), General Service Administration (1989-present).
4. Builders, contractors, suppliers: Unknown.
5. Original plans and construction: Original plans and drawings not located.
6. Alterations and additions: Building 1 has experienced a number of alterations and additions, especially following the Army's acquisition of the Arlington Hall Junior College property in 1942. At that time second floor dormitory suites were converted to office space, as was a first-story room originally used as a chapel. In 1952 a branch office of the U.S. Post Office was located in renovated basement space. Other alterations in 1952 included the enclosure of the second-story porch located on the north end of the East Wing. Acoustical tile ceilings were installed on the third floor in 1956. A small three-story addition to the west end of the building dates from this period. A single-story addition was constructed against the south side of the East Wing post-1963.

- B. Historical Context: Building 1 was constructed in 1927 as the Main Building of the Arlington Hall Junior College for Women. The buff brick, Colonial Revival style building housed administrative offices, reception rooms, classrooms, and dormitory rooms. Set in informally landscaped grounds, the building was reached by a curved, wooded drive. In 1928 a wing was constructed at the east side of the building. Connections between the upper floors of the east and main wing were constructed ca. 1933.

The first floor of the Main Building originally contained formal reception rooms and administrative offices. A chapel and library were also located on the first floor. Art and music studios occupied the west end of the floor. The second and third floors served as dormitory space for the school's students. The floors consisted of double-loaded corridors that opened into bedrooms. The residents of two bedrooms shared a bath. The second and third floors also contained a private room and bath for a middle-aged woman known as the Resident Assistant, Chaperon, or Hostess. The Main Building's fourth floor served as classroom space. Other classrooms occupied the north section of the east wing's first floor.

Laboratories and home economics rooms occupied the basement of the west wing, while a dining room and kitchen, as well as some storerooms occupied the lower level of the east wing.

In 1942 the U.S. Army took over Arlington Hall Junior College and established its Signal Intelligence Service on the former campus. The Army slightly altered the Main Building to accommodate new uses. Newly activated units of the Cryptanalytic (B) Section occupied the west end of the third and fourth floors of the building's west wing. The Cryptographic Section occupied the east wing. The Chief Signal Officer's office was located on the first floor, along with the SIS's Tabulating Machine Unit. The building also housed a small dispensary, various administrative offices, and a cafeteria located in the former school dining room.

Wartime increases in staff quickly filled the building beyond capacity. In late 1942, after the completion of a massive operations building (Building 401), Building 1 became the facility's administration building.

After World War II minor alterations were made at various times to accommodate new office arrangements. Sometime after 1963 a single story addition was built on the south side of the East Wing. The building has continued to serve as headquarters for Army intelligence. Much of the work conducted in the building remains classified.

Part II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Georgian Revival.
2. Condition of fabric: Good.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Building 1 is L-shaped, with a single-story rectangular addition at the inner corner of the "L". The original block of the building is four stories in height, with a basement, and measures approximately 296 feet by 44 feet. The East Wing is three stories, with an exposed basement, and measures approximately 190 feet by 40 feet. A single story addition measuring approximately 32 feet by 100 feet is positioned adjacent, and parallel to the south facade of the East Wing. An extension measuring approximately 20 feet by 40 feet is located at the west side of this addition.
2. Foundations: Concrete foundations with brick veneer to grade.
3. Walls: Buff brick.

4. Structural systems, framing: Structural concrete plaster walls with concrete beams and columns.
5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: The principal, north, entry consists of a three-story flat roofed portico. Large wood columns sheathed in stucco with Ionic capitals support a full entablature with dentils.

Wrought iron fire escapes are located on the south facade of the main block. A small shed-roofed loading dock is located on the east side of the East Wing. The south gable end of the East Wing contains a single story brick stoop with concrete stairs and landing slab.

6. Chimneys: Two sets of coupled brick chimneys are located at the gable ends of the porticoed section of the main block. The chimneys are corbeled at the top and includes a brick string course just below the corbel. The East Wing incorporates the use of false chimneys at its gable ends.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The principal, north, entry incorporates a deep-set door with paneled wood side walls. The fifteen-light door is flanked by four-light sidelights with a fanlight above. The doorway is framed by a full pediment, complete with dentils and a full entablature. The pediment is supported by fluted pilasters with Corinthian capitals.

The south entry includes paired fifteen-light doors under a broken pediment supported by plain Doric pilasters.

Other doorways are wood and include a paired set of four-light paneled doors at the basement of the south facade and a pair of multi-light doors at the connecting portion between the main block and the East Wing.

- b. Windows and shutters: Window openings are placed symmetrically on the various facades, the majority have paired six-over-six double-hung wood sash used in conjunction with four-over-four double-hung wood sash. The first story of the main block as well as the first and second stories of the East Wing include paired six-light fixed transoms above the paired window units. All window openings have concrete sills and lintels with modified integral keystones.

Other windows include nine-over-nine double-hung sash at stairwell locations and a Palladian window located directly

above the south entry. The Palladian window is set within a rowlock elliptical arch with decorative wood infill panels above the sidelights and includes a keystone above the center sash.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Gable roofs with gabled dormers cover both the main block and the East Wing. The roof of the main block is divided at the central section by protruding end gables with coupled chimneys. A flat roof occurs over the west addition to the East Wing, as well as over the east and west extensions of the main block. The East Wing has two cross gables on the east facade.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Wood box cornice with dentils.
- c. Dormers, cupolas, towers: The roof of the main block includes twenty-one gabled dormers per side. The dormer windows are round-arched double-hung nine-over-six wood sash. The upper sash have arched muntins. The dormer windows are flanked by plain Doric pilasters. The East Wing roof includes fifteen gabled dormers similar in form to those on the main block.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:

- a. Basement: The main block has a partially excavated basement with double-loaded corridors opening into office space. The East Wing includes double-loaded corridors at the basement level and a partial sub-basement.
- b. First floor: The main block and the East Wing have double-loaded corridors flanked by rooms used as offices. The main block contains a central stairwell with flanking stairwells located midway down the corridor to the east and west of the central stair. The building section connecting the main block to the East Wing also includes a stairwell. The East Wing contains a stairwell at the south end.
- c. Second floor: The second floor plan essentially duplicated that of the first floor, with double-loaded corridors, flanking offices, and stairwells.
- d. Third floor: The main block and the East Wing contain double-loaded corridors flanked by offices.

- e. Fourth floor: The fourth floor of the main block contains a narrow, off-center, double-loaded corridor flanked by rooms incorporating dormers and skylights.
- 2. Stairways: The principal stairwell contains central runs with double flanking returns between flights. Other stairwells contain typical runs with a return between flights. The stairs are constructed of wood with rubber treads, and wood balustrades.
- 3. Flooring: Linoleum flooring with wood baseboards.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finishes: Painted concrete plaster walls predominate. The entry hall of the main block includes wood wainscotting. Alterations to wall and ceiling finishes include acoustical tile ceilings and a variety of other finishes.
- 5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Wood doors set in wood frames with operable four-light transoms above occur throughout most of the building. The first-story of the main block contains paired fifteen-light doors with eight-light transom located in the corridor as well as at the entrance to certain rooms. Some intra-room connections also incorporate this configuration of doors and transoms.
 - b. Windows: The concrete plaster walls are squared at the window surrounds. The window openings include wood sills.
- 6. Decorative features and trim: A fireplace is located in each of the four first floor rooms abutting the main block entry hall. Each fireplace opening includes fluted columns flanking a marble facing, a wood frieze and supporting wood mantels. Marble hearths laid in diamond patterns complete the design. A large mirror with a highly ornate frame is located above the fireplace in Room 115, northwest of the entry hall.
- 7. Hardware: Metal.
- 8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Steam radiators located throughout the building.
 - b. Lighting: Fluorescent lighting occurs throughout the building.

- c. Plumbing: The plumbing systems have been up-graded and improved, particularly following the Army's acquisition of the property in 1942.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: The front facade faces north onto a curved road connecting Fifth and Seventh Streets and overlooking a wooded hollow. The building is surrounded by walks, shade trees, shrubbery, and a lawn that slopes gradually downhill to the southeast, exposing the basement level of the East Wing. The East Wing runs parallel to Fifth Street and forms an ell with the main block.
- 2. Historic landscape design: The building is placed within the bucolic college campus designed in 1927. The tree-lined entry drive, wooded hollow to the north, and informal plantings are all part of this design. Informal gardens at the rear of the building originally contained meandering flagstone paths lined with perennials and stone benches.
- 3. Outbuildings: A fixed aluminum trailer is located south of the main block.

Part III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- A. Original Architectural Drawings: On file at Facility Engineer's Office, Arlington Hall Station, Arlington, Virginia.
- B. Early Views: Historic Photographs File. INSCOM Command Historian's Office, Fort Belvoir, Virginia.
- C. Bibliography:
 - 1. Primary and unpublished sources: *Arlington Hall Junior College Washington, D.C.* Brochure on file at Arlington County Library, Arlington, Virginia; *History of the Signal Security Agency*. Part of a classified IO volume series. Declassified portions of the series on file at INSCOM Command Historian's Office, Fort Belvoir, Virginia.
 - 2. Secondary and published sources: "An Interview with Miss Frances S. Jennings Former Dean Arlington Hall Junior College." *The Arlington Historical Magazine* 8 (October 1988): 26-34.
- D. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated: Classified material and files held by INSCOM, Fort Belvoir, Virginia and National Security Agency, Fort Meade, Virginia.

Part IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation was undertaken in September 1989 in accordance with a Memorandum of Agreement between the General Services Administration, the Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as a mitigative measure prior to the demolition of the subject buildings at Arlington Hall Station.

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